

Consanguinity between Language and Literature Teaching

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Abstract

A few years ago, there was a decisive swing against the teaching of literature in English as a foreign language. Modern linguistic emphasized the primacy of spoken language. This made many thinkers distrust the written form of language. Literature was thought of as static and complicated kind of language which was quite different from the utterances of daily communication. Therefore, it was reserved only for the most advanced level of study. Even at that level, it was said that critical terms would not be studied satisfactorily. Similarly, in some cases literature was seen as an undersinle collection of cultural connotations. Only functional kind of English without any implication of cultural imperialism was needed. In this paper, I present the teaching of Literature and their Refutation. a¹1nd the relationship of Language and Literature which is a complementary phenomenon.

Keywords: connotation, linguistic, static, undersinle etc.

Introduction

A more neutral language relevant to the demands of particular uses such as for business, advertisement, travel or tourism was needed. As a result, majority of thinkers believed that it was unnecessary to introduce literature to our students. Development of language skills was considered as the main aim in teaching English and so the study of literature was supposed to be nothing but waste of time. That is why, as Christopher Brumfit has said, 'Recent approaches to language teaching have ignored literature teaching. 'However, keeping literature away from the syllabus has produced unease among the learners. Most of the experts in the field of foreign language teaching agree that literature should constitute an essential part of the modern language teaching courses. In the same way, it is true that many learners want and love literary texts.

They also wish to become more familiar with social and cultural life of the people of the country in which the target language is used. In addition, from the teacher's point of view, Literature provides material with some emotional colour. Thus, Literature is useful for both the learner and the teacher.

Argument against Teaching of Literature and their Refutation

Various arguments are made against the teaching of literature in a language class. Such arguments along with their refutation can be stated in detail as follows:

i. Teaching of 'Usage' and not the 'Use.': The first argument against the use of literature is that literature is used to teach language usage. It has rarely been used to develop language use which has more practical significance than usage. However, here literature has the advantage of presenting language in discourse. Literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use. In the same way, most of modern literary texts assume that texts focus on the particular grammatical points which are salient in the text. Povey (Povey, Drew- 'Developing people and inspiring') argues that literature will increase all language skills.

ii. Occupational Goals not Prompted: Another argument against the use of literature is that it will do nothing for prompting the student's academic or occupational goals. However, this is not a complete truth. Literature can foster an overall increase in reading proficiency and so it will contribute to the academic or professional goals.

iii. Difficulty for Reading: Next, critics of the use of literature

maintain the fact that literary texts may prove to be difficult for ESI students to read. This is because literary texts reflect a particular cultural perspective. This can be a problem. However, actually we are often benefitted by examining cultural assumptions of a piece of literature. Northrop Frye, Canadian Educator and literary Critic, thinks that one of its uses is the encouragement of tolerance. Another advantage here is that the student's creativity is prompted.

iv. Time consuming Fact: A few scholars argue that literary texts may consume time of teaching. Literary texts are bigger and also about new society. . However, this problem can be solved by prescribing shorter texts and by appropriate teaching techniques.

v. Functional purpose not fulfilled: In modern age, functional aspect of language is emphasized. It is said that literature does not help for this purpose. However, this is again half-truth. In reality, literary texts help for the development of four skills of language.

Reason for studying Literature:

The above discussion shows that the points against the use of literature in language teaching are negligible. So, it is clear that literature should be taught in an ESL class. Various linguists and critics have emphasised certain reasons for studying literature. These reasons are:

i. Literature is valuable Authentic Material: One of the major reasons for using literature in the language learning and teaching process is that literature offers as extremely varied body of written material. It says something about fundamental human issues. A literary text indeed is an authentic text. It is real language in context. It is permanent and not temporary. Its significance never disappears.

For example, the plays of Shakespeare are now interpreted differently but their significance has not gone away.

Literatures should be called 'authentic' material. This means that most of literary works are not prepared for the specific purpose of teaching a language. Recent course materials have included many 'authentic' samples of language. Such materials include newspaper articles, advertisements, cartoons, travel timetables etc. By this, learners are exposed to genuine language. Literature can be called a valuable complement to such materials. Students read the texts and so learn different linguistic uses such as irony, narration, argument and metaphor.

ii. Literature helps in Cultural Enrichment: Another benefit of learning literature is that literature helps for cultural enrichments of students. Learners always wish to know about the life and social

conventions of the people living abroad. It is not possible for all to go to the country and experience the life-manners there. This desire though indirectly fulfilled by literature and a few other mediums like films, newspapers, T.V and radio programmes. Literature offers us context of the social ways of behaviour. The learners learn about the characters in a novel or in a drama. They also learn about their behaviour, their feelings, customs and their thoughts. In short, literature offers the readers the cultural structure of a society in a foreign country. For example, the novels of the regional novelists like R.K. Narayan, Thomas Hardy and Arnold Bennet give the readers lifelike pictures of the societies of South India, Sussex in England and of America, respectively. Thus, literature remains a complement to other material, used to increase foreign learner's insight into the country whose language is being learnt.

iii. Literature helps for Language Enrichment: Language enrichment is one benefit after sought through literature. It is often objected that literature does not give learners the kind of vocabulary they really need. It is also said that the language or literary texts is, on the whole, not typical of the language of daily life. It is also not the language used in the textbooks of the learners. For example, students are not expected to think the language of Elizabeth Barret Browning's love poem is just like the utterances whispered into a lover's ears.

According to William Littlewood, says "Literature provides instances of language structures in use." (Communicative Language and Teaching: An Introduction, p.720-721) This can form the basis for instruction and practice in the language skills. Similarly, according to R.A. Carter (Literature & Language Teaching, 1984) and C.J. Brumfit (Teaching Literature in a foreign language, 1989) a literary text helps the students for "extending their language into more advanced language competence." The author says that Literature 'assists students in identifying and understanding the operation of language schemata 'of 'ordinary discourse.'

iv. Literature fosters personal involvement in Readers: Literature can also be helpful in the language learning process because it fosters personal involvement

In readers. Engaging imaginatively with literature enables learners to shift their focus of their attention beyond the mechanical aspects of the foreign language system. When a novel or a drama or a short story is explored over a period of time, the reader begins to 'inhibit' the text. He is drawn to the book. He becomes eager to know what happens as events unfold. He feels closer to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. The language becomes transparent and the text summons the whole person into its own world.

v. Literature promotes Student's Creativity: One more reason for the use of literature in the language learning process is that it promotes the imaginative written or creative power of the learners. Northrop Frye, Canadian educator and literary critic says:

'It is clear that the end (aim) of literary teaching is not simply the admiration of literature, it's something more like the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to the students.'

vi. Literature increases Learners' Reading Proficiency: - One more reason for teaching literature in an ELT class is that literature increases the learners' reading proficiency. Many students enjoy reading literature and enjoyment plays an important role in any learning process. Thus, literary texts aid in the development of reading proficiency. By doing so, they contribute a great deal to a students' academic and occupational objectives.

vii. Literature Helps for Inferring Meaning: According to Widdowson, a British Linguist, literature helps in students to infer meanings by interacting with the text. Things are often deliberately left unclear in literary texts. The plays of Bernard Shaw, for instance, have typical open ends. Students are inspired to get clues for the solution of the problems. Thus, the meaning is to be guessed by
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procedural activity. Such training in getting the meaning is a crucial factor in the development of language learning abilities. This also makes literature more enjoyable and stimulating for the learners. Thus, a focus on literature as discourse can contribute a great deal of language study. This also helps students to appreciate fully the nature of literature as literature.

viii. Literature encourages Tolerance: According to Northrop Frye, one of the reasons for studying literature is its encouragement to tolerance. Literature teaches as well as entertains. It has more moral preaching for readers. It teaches us how to face the problems of life. Frye says:

"So, you may ask what is the use of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs and all arguments are equally good. One of the most obvious uses, I think, is encouragement of tolerance."

ix. Other Reasons: Apart from the above stated major reasons, a few minor reasons can also be given for studying literature in an ELT class. First, as Dr. Radhakrishnan said,

"Literature has the supreme function of raising the quality of human beings. When we read great classics, our minds become dyed to their thoughts. They induce in us largeness of mind and elevate our nature. Secondly, in Indian situation, English literature provides the learners an opportunity for comparative study."

Finally, as R.J. Rees, Eminent Educationist has stated, the study of literature helps us to appear well-educated.

Thus, the reasons stated above reveal the fact that literature should essentially be taught in an ESL class.

Relationship between Teaching of Language and Teaching of Literature: A Complementary Phenomenon

It is a fact that language teaching and literature teaching are closely related. In fact, they are not two separate activities. Both are complementary processes. One needs sensitivity to language for literary appreciation and literary works are repositories of authentic language use. The study of the following points will bring out the nature of the relationship of language and literature.

First of all, a literary text is real language in context. Readers can respond to it directly. It offers a context in which discussion of content leads on naturally to examination of language. Literary texts provide examples of language resources and the reader is put in an active international role in making sense of this language.

Secondly, it is difficult to make a linguistic distinction between literature and other kinds of language. If this is the case, there is no 'a priori' reason for banishing literature from the language curriculum.

Thirdly, language and literature may appear to be separate from the point of view of the teacher. However, they do not necessarily appear so to the learner. For the learner, literature is also a language.

Fourthly, literature, indeed, is a potentially useful aid to the language teacher. This is because enjoyment plays an important role in any learning process and many learners enjoy reading literature.

Fifthly, if a student is taught language and literature by the same person, it is possible for the lessons to be mutually reinforcing. Literature can be used to identify difficulties experienced by students in reading.

Sixthly, a major problem of language teaching in the class room is

of an authentic situation for language. A language classroom is generally isolated from the context of events and situations which provide natural language. In the case of literature, language creates its own context. The actual situation of the reader becomes immaterial as he plays the role of an onlooker. He looks on the events of the book.

Finally, reading is the most autonomous ability in language work and literature is a rich and widely appealing source for material for reading. It is also easily and cheaply available.

Conclusion

Thus, literature has a very important role in a foreign language learning programme. It provides a very rich and widely appealing source of material for reading and the material is readily available. Literature can give students practical training in reading literary writings. In this process, students are enabled to prove their own competence of the English language. According to Rodger, our aim is to give students communicative awareness and language consciousness outside the scope of conventional language. So, the selection of material for study will be made on linguistic rather than aesthetic grounds. The books to be selected should be interesting and enjoyable. They should be relevant to the experiences of dreams of the learners. They must involve some special incentive. There should be a good match between a particular group of learners and the literary works they will have to study. Finally, let the students derive the benefits of communicative and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable works of literature.

To sum up, it can be said that there is no conflict between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. The two processes are, really complementary.

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